

[How Capitalism Copes With Calamities](#)  
[Will Capitalism Last Forever?](#)  
[Labour's Brighton Circus](#)  
[The Well-Directed Heckle](#)  
[Truth Will Out - Shakespeare](#)  
[Teaching Superstition and Dogma](#)  
["Surely Not What The Good Lord Intended"](#)  
[Capitalism Causes Terrorism and War](#)  
[Chinese Workers: Dying For a Profit](#)  
[Free Trade, Protectionism or No Trade](#)  
[Adam Smith Through The Eyes Of Karl Marx](#)  
[In Terror of Marx](#)  
[Our Reply To The CPGB](#)  
[Is Socialism Dead?](#)  
[Q & A: Help - One Socialist Party](#)  
[General Secretary's Report for 2005](#)

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## How Capitalism Copes With Calamities

We are often asked just how would Socialism work. What exactly is meant by "*from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs*", and "*production for use, not for profit*"? Behind such questions, there is often a genuine fear that what Socialists advocate would turn out to be a madcap, utopian experiment, likely to end in disaster or some nightmare of a dictatorship. There is also the unspoken assumption that capitalism actually works. But the persistence of poverty and misery, cyclical mass unemployment, and wars: all these features of today's world, in spite of the best efforts of generations of politicians and reformers, show clearly that the capitalist social and economic system has serious, dangerous, incurable, systemic drawbacks.

Let us consider some recent experiences of natural disasters in many parts of the world, including the all-powerful United States of America. Recent examples - just in the last year or so – include the following:-

- \* A tsunami in the Indian Ocean
- \* Cyclones in the Bay of Bengal
- \* Drought and famine in Niger
- \* Typhoons flooding coastal China
- \* Hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico, flooding New Orleans
- \* Earthquake in mountainous regions of Pakistan and Kashmir
- \* Floods and landslips in Central America

Whether exceptionally strong hurricanes, cyclones, typhoons and flooding are – at least in part – caused by climate change may still be a moot point. Look however at the *effects* of these events which

have affected such large numbers of people. Capitalism's ways of dealing with natural disasters show up many shortcomings of this system.

## New Orleans Blues

As Hurricane Katrina approached the Gulf of Mexico, warnings went out that New Orleans and other cities on the Coast must be evacuated, and the TV news showed a huge stream of cars leaving, heading inland. But days later, a helicopter with a news crew flew over the flooded city, and showed a fleet of school buses, still parked there.

Those with vehicles and the money to buy petrol, got into their cars and drove away. Those who had no vehicles, or no money for petrol, were abandoned, including many old and disabled people. The principle of this 'evacuation' was "*saue qui peut*" – get out if you can, each man for himself.

The US government's sluggish reaction was not only incompetent but showed that its priority was to prevent looting, i.e. to protect (commercial) property, not to rescue and care for these unfortunate people. Instead of sending helicopters to rescue the stranded survivors, and bringing in doctors, medical supplies, clean water, food, etc., its first reaction was to declare a state of emergency, order a curfew, and to send in police and National Guards with orders to shoot to kill. Weeks later, the flooded, filthy streets of New Orleans were still being patrolled by macho National Guards, armed and menacing, as if on patrol in Iraq, ready to kill but with no orders to help with rescue efforts or with the removal of bodies, left lying and rotting. The stench could be smelt high above the city, by reporters flying over it in helicopters.

Not long after, warnings of yet another major hurricane were broadcast, this one apparently heading for Houston, the fourth largest city in the US, and Galveston, a port of crucial importance for the American oil industry. Another 'evacuation' took place: millions of people took to the main roads heading inland, resulting in what must be the longest traffic jam ever recorded. Most simply ran out of petrol, stuck on the road, as their cars' air-conditioning systems used up their fuel fast in the sweltering hot weather.

This was as shambolic as the New Orleans evacuation experience, so much so that many decided to return home rather than be hit by the hurricane on the road. Maybe something had been learnt from the New Orleans disaster: at least this time, some efforts were made to evacuate hospitals, nursing homes, and the disabled.

But meanwhile, wild rumours were circulating about a terrifying crime wave, rapes, murder and looting, all caused by the poor, mostly black, inner-city refugees from New Orleans: these unsubstantiated rumours spread by fear and prejudice were exaggerated out of all proportion.

## Of Rich and Poor

A BBC2 NEWSNIGHT report (22 September 2005) noted that these hurricanes had exposed the gap between America's rich and poor: "*the gap between the two Americas, between rich and poor, is now a canyon*", and described these "*two Americas*" as "*communities living separate lives ...parallel lives*".

Way back in the 19th century, in his novel, *Sybil*, Disraeli wrote: "*I was told that the Privileged and the People formed Two Nations*". Now, nearly two hundred years later, in the wealthiest, most advanced state that capitalism has yet produced, one which is able to land men on the moon, to bomb countries the other side of the world, and whose armed forces have bases in every continent of the globe: this state too, like Victorian Britain, is one of "*Two Nations*".

With these "communities living parallel lives", an event like the sudden evacuation of the inner-city poor of New Orleans, to turn up on the doorsteps of their more affluent fellow-citizens, the result was often fear and mistrust, rather than willing offers of help, and shelter for the homeless. A look at the social and economic conditions under which so many American wage-slaves exist today shows much the same picture as that described long ago by the young Disraeli, by Jack London (THE PEOPLE OF THE ABYSS), and John Steinbeck (THE GRAPES OF

WRATH).

Such is what passes for ‘progress’ in capitalism. Such is the evident failure of governments and their various reforms. Poverty is the unavoidable effect of capitalism for most of the population, even if sometimes ameliorated by ‘welfare’ programmes.

## ‘Living in poverty’

The number of US workers ‘*living in poverty*’ increased in 2004 to over 12% of the population, about 36m people. In southern states like Mississippi, Georgia and Louisiana, the infant mortality rate is worse than that of Cuba, an ‘emerging nation’. In these southern states, around 90 per cent of families are living on the brink, with no health insurance, so that if any serious medical problem hits anyone in the family, that puts them into the growing category of those described as ‘living in poverty’.

Likewise, whilst the relatively affluent in the New Orleans area will have been able to make insurance claims for hurricane damage, and so start to rebuild their homes and replace their belongings, a great many New Orleans workers - those ‘*living in poverty*’ especially – will have been without any insurance cover. No doubt this fact will be seen as something of a blessing by those involved in the insurance industry/racket. The insurance business is not philanthropy and definitely does not operate on Socialist principles: “*to each according to their needs*” would bankrupt any insurance company in no time at all.

In many American cities like New Orleans, there are long queues of people waiting every day at community centres to collect free food – this is usually donated by local supermarkets from the previous day’s unsold stocks. Those queuing for these leftovers tell inquisitive reporters that “*we have homes, and jobs*” but the money earned is just “*peanuts*”, not enough to feed the family, once the bills have been paid. These supermarket leftovers, like charities and state dole money (‘welfare’ or ‘benefits’), represent how the sensible maxim “*to each according to their needs*” operates in capitalism: it is only the extremely desperate and the desperately poor who will put up with such daily humiliation. They have little choice in the matter.

Such people are not ‘work-shy’. Every day, seven days a week, New Orleans labourers turn up at dawn, waiting all day in the hope of some work being offered. Typically, such workers can only get three or four days’ work in a week, if that. So even if the rate of pay was even halfway adequate, there is no way such a worker’s family can be kept, fed, clothed and provided for, with only a few days’ paid work in a week. With only such casual jobs available, it is hardly surprising that, in “*God’s Own Country*” - “*the land of the brave, the home of the free*” - so many show up in the statistics as “*living in poverty*”.

As a (black) New Orleans woman bitterly commented: “*it’s not just race, it’s class. Poor people - you see them but you don’t see them.*” Such is the existence of the descendants of slaves under the modern, wage-slave, capitalist system.

The so-called ‘Third World’ of grinding poverty is to be found in the most affluent of states but with this difference: an affluent and powerful state like the USA has the ability to mitigate the worst conditions of its poorest citizens but its politicians choose not to. These same pious politicians then lecture the rest of the world about the need for “*good governance*”!

The media discovered – surprise, surprise! – that in the last few years the government had cut back on much-needed maintenance and repair work on New Orleans’s flood defences; and that, although experts had recommended (some years back) that the city’s flood defences be upgraded to protect properly against the increased likelihood and frequency of strong hurricanes, nothing had been done.

As the old rhyme has it:

For want of a nail, the shoe was lost.  
For want of a shoe, the horse was lost.  
For want of the horse, the rider was lost.

For want of the rider, the battle was lost.  
And all for the lack of a horse-shoe nail.

Whilst the focus of the world's media was on the Gulf of Mexico hurricanes, there were cyclones in the Bay of Bengal, causing considerable loss of life, but largely unreported in the British mass media. Later, the coast of China was hit by yet another typhoon, the 19th this year, causing serious flooding, the evacuation of large numbers of people, and probably serious loss of life. But the mass media were not interested in this, and it was hardly reported.

A major earthquake has caused huge loss of life in remote and mountainous regions of Pakistan and the disputed border province of Kashmir. A month later, and the border dispute still hampers efforts at rescue. As winter's bitter cold hits the Himalayas, those without proper shelter will die. Aid has been too little, and too late.

That loss of life would have been less if help could have been brought promptly by helicopters to the outlying villages. Yet it took nearly a week after the quake for even partial agreement for Indian troops to be allowed to cross the border to bring help to the unfortunate survivors. As ever, capitalist politics plays a part in making a bad situation worse.

## Was god to blame?

The Socialist is always astonished at the way survivors of disasters manage to drag God into the question: it is “*allah akhbar*” – *God is great!* – as a child is found alive in the rubble of a school. But, if God is to be thanked for this child's rescue, that same merciful God must also be responsible for the many other children and adults dead and dying, as a result of what people are taught to see, superstitiously, as an ‘*act of God*’. Religion, or rather, superstition prevents them from understanding this as, primarily, a natural disaster.

One recalls the Indian Ocean *tsunami*: triggered by an earthquake, this was an event which could not have been prevented. But the catastrophic and largely avoidable loss of life would have been far less if there had been some system in place to give advance warning of this huge tidal surge.

Yet such advance warning systems had actually been set up elsewhere, for instance in the Pacific Ocean, to monitor seismic events on the sea-floor. Any atlas with a geological map of the region will show that the Indonesian archipelago is one of the worst places in the world for earthquakes. Such a warning system was in fact considered at an earlier conference by the various Indian Ocean governments – considered but rejected due to the cost.

So it was not just the tsunami that caused so many tragically avoidable deaths. It was a matter of capitalism's financial priorities. One of those governments, India, has the means to run a considerable army with nuclear weapons and missiles. Another, Indonesia, is a major buyer of military aircraft and arms from Britain and other arms-exporting states. And yet, the relatively trivial cost of setting up and maintaining such a seismic monitoring system was, it seems, too costly.

Another state with an interest in predicting tsunamis in the Indian Ocean was the United States. The Pentagon had established on Diego Garcia (the largest of the Chagos islands, west of Sri Lanka) a massive airbase from which bombing raids are made on Afghanistan, Iraq and anywhere else in the Middle East or eastern Africa that the US government wants to dominate. It is inconceivable that such an expensive piece of military real estate would not have had a sophisticated system to warn of adverse weather conditions. If so, this important, life-saving advance information seems not to have been made public.

No warnings were issued, even though, after reports of the earthquake, the tsunami took several hours to reach many of the coastal communities it hit and destroyed. Such then are the priorities of capitalism's politicians: power and profits first, people last.

However, capitalists have a variety of ways of profiting from disasters. As the old saying has it, it's an ill wind... Or, in the immortal words of Guizot, a 19th century Frenchman, *enrichissez-vous!* That is the motto of all war-profiteers, likewise of those who seek to profit from disasters. In New Orleans and other flooded American cities, that is precisely what Halliburton, Bechtel and other camp-followers of the US army are doing, no doubt very profitably. No

doubt reconstruction work in Louisiana and Texas will be a lot less risky than their, profitable, single-bidder, insider contracts for the ‘reconstruction’ of Iraq.

In other countries, it is remarkable the way the capitalist scum always seem to come off best after any natural disaster. For instance, in 1998 Bangladesh suffered such serious flooding that two-thirds of the country was under water. Not long after, land in the Ganges delta region was deliberately flooded to provide for the expansion of a growing export industry – the farming of crayfish, for export to the West. One effect of this has been to turn many poor peasants and their children into starveling day-labourers.

This industry hugely increases the salinity of the water which, leaking out, kills off all surrounding vegetation and makes livestock sick. Over time, it has also caused the destruction of the mangroves which had given protection from cyclones: an effect of this was that an estimated 300,000 Bengalis died in the 1991 floods, even though a similar strength tsunami in 1960 had caused no deaths. In addition to these deaths, the crayfish industry’s hired thugs have murdered many of those who protested against it, not just in Bangladesh but in at least 10 other tropical countries, including Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand, and various Central American states (*Au Bangladesh - une pauperisation moderne*, LE MONDE DIPLOMATIQUE, August 2005).

Enrichissez-vous! This is the motto of the capitalists. This is their entrepreneurial morality: profit first, people last.

## **The Socialist approach**

Socialists have a different approach. We say that to be human requires concern, care and consideration for our fellow-humans, and for other species of the world we all depend on. In a Socialist society, with the means of producing wealth being owned in common and democratically controlled by the whole community, in the interest of the whole community, the inhuman, selfish, greedy, grab what you can, principle of the capitalist system would be both incomprehensible and utterly unacceptable.

In such a society, when a natural disaster struck, such as the New Orleans hurricane, it is inconceivable that the old and the sick would have been left behind. Nor would poverty - lack of money - have meant that so many people were unable to leave the city, or stayed behind, fearing to leave their, uninsured, homes unattended.

We do not suggest for a moment that a Socialist society would solve all problems. There will be earthquakes and tsunamis, hurricanes, cyclones, typhoons and volcanic eruptions, but how a Socialist society would prepare for and cope with catastrophe would be very different from how capitalism conspicuously fails to cope.

The Socialist principle of “*from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs*” involves no assumptions about people all having the same abilities or the same, identical, needs. Clearly, since people have a variety of differing abilities and different needs, a Socialist society must be one which tries to answer those different needs and make the best use possible of people’s different abilities.

Importantly, this Socialist principle makes no reference to capitalism’s guiding principle, the ability to pay. Unlike capitalism, if someone needs help to rescue them from hurricanes and floods, such a society will not ask to see the colour of their money first. Nor would such a society, with no need for expensive military hardware, decide not to provide a simple and inexpensive early warning system to warn of tsunamis in an earthquake-prone region.

This is not rocket science – it is plain commonsense. Are we Socialists the only ones who are not mad, the only ones to deny that capitalism is “*the best of all possible worlds*”?

In New Orleans and Pakistan, as in the Indian Ocean, the huge gap between what is done and what could be done is an obvious indictment of the capitalist system. As ever, the capitalist class and their politicians are concerned first with profits, property and power. Even while they claim that properly built and maintained flood defences (New Orleans) and life-saving warning systems (Indonesia) would be too costly, they spend huge sums on armaments and wars. That is not only mad but murderous.

This winter, when the Boxing Day anniversary of the Indian Ocean *tsunami* comes up, Socialists will remember how

that tragic loss of life was caused, how it could have been so easily prevented, and why it was not prevented – because of the trivial cost of a warning system.

This horrific contrast between how things are, and how they should be and could be, is a constant reminder to us of the truly urgent need for Socialism.

[Back to top](#)

# Will Capitalism Last Forever?

Will capitalism last forever as its supporters claim? Is the squalor, the poverty, the human degradation and exploitation that we see around us the final pinnacle of social evolution?

No social system has lasted forever so why should capitalism be the exception to the rule?

Primitive communism, the slave societies of Greece and Rome, feudalism have all come and gone. Nothing lasts forever. Who would have imagined state capitalism in East Europe evaporating within five years?

What is so special about capitalism that its adherents believe it will last forever? Why will the profit system buck the historical trend? For, if it is conceded that capitalism will last forever, what is being said?

Capitalism is based on class exploitation. The class struggle is embedded with commodity production and exchange for profit. Capitalism cannot meet the needs of all society - its drive for profit makes this impossible. Even if capitalism lasts this century, certain characteristics would remain:

- Exploitation and class struggle;
- War;
- Poverty;
- Periodic economic crises, trade depressions and high levels of unemployment;
- Dissent and questioning would still exist.

Socialists would still be created by the class struggle, and the inability and disinterestedness of capitalism to meet the needs of all society.

The belief - or better still wishful thinking - that capitalism will last forever is preposterous. And there is a very good Marxist reason why: the working class.

Not the working class of the capitalist left with their cloth caps and estuary English. Not the working class found in dry sociological text books. But the working class majority who are forced to sell their ability to work for a wage or a salary. This is the working class addressed by Marx and The SPGB.

The abolition of classes is possible only where capitalist relations of production have raised the productivity of labour to a point where scarcity can be abolished.

We have long since passed beyond this point. The 20 million unemployed workers in the EU are just one example of the failure of capitalism to meet the needs of all society. So too is the destruction which takes place in trade depressions; the stock-piling of unsold commodities, and the deliberate cutting- back of production in the face of lower or non-existent profit expectations.

The relations of production – the capital-labour relationship - continues, year by year, to act as a fetter on the productive forces. There is nothing that capitalists or their politicians can do about this tendency. And it is this tendency which deepens the class struggle.

But there is more to it than that. Capitalism generates a powerful social force within the forces of production itself. And that force is the working class.

Of course, the class struggle is not smooth. Marx made this point in the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO where he said that the working class would experience ups and downs. But, unlike the Roman proletariat, the working class has developed from an incoherent mass to a sophisticated class, capable of thinking for themselves politically, becoming Socialists and establishing a political party. No oppressed group in any previous social system went that far to act in its own interests; not even the capitalist class who were so dependent on working-class support in the struggle against feudalism.

The working class has come far. And that is a positive development.

Yet a few socialists spread across the planet are not enough. There has to be a socialist majority. Socialism and the establishment of Socialism depend on the organisation, consciousness and political activity of a working-class majority throughout the world. World capitalism has to be replaced by world Socialism.

This idea of the *self-emancipation of the working class* is central to Marx's political thought as a socialist revolutionary. Along with his conclusion that the working class has to abolish the wages system, his insistence that the establishment of Socialism and the abolition of classes has to be the work of the working class alone: these are the two most important political ideas of the last two hundred years.

In doing so he identified capitalism's gravediggers. And what we urge the working class to do throughout the world is to dig. That is the Socialist reply to those who believe capitalism will last forever.

[Back to top](#)

## Labour's Brighton Circus

The Labour Party's conference circus at Brighton this year was devoted mainly to personality manoeuvres, to decide which of the two most prominent clowns would be ringmaster for the foreseeable future – Blair or Brown. Both gave totally bankrupt policy speeches promising future reforms, aimed at solving problems in health, education, transport, pensions, and law and order, problems that they have failed to solve in eight years of power. These reform policies of Blair and Brown would have the effect of unpicking past generations of reforms on state health and pensions, and suffered two defeats at the hands of trade union delegates, which will be ignored by whichever ringmaster is in charge.

Brown, in staking his leadership bid, gave his vision of "*a great British society*". This was reminiscent of President Lyndon Johnson's "*great society*" pledge which gave us wholesale slaughter in Vietnam. Brown spoke of "*social justice*", as a seventy-three year old pensioner, Sylvia Hardy, was jailed for refusing to pay council tax arrears. She was the second pensioner to be sent to prison, with the threat of more to come.

The term 'conference' is misapplied to these Labour Party gatherings, which are probably even more stage-managed than those of the other Tory party. Admission is restricted to pass-holders with identity badges, who are subject to scrutiny by pass inspectors. This helps to ensure a hall filled to about half its capacity, with yes-men and women who are harangued from the platform by the chosen few, and who could be relied on to applaud, even if Blair and Brown had recited their speeches from the Yellow Pages.

The whole puerile situation arises because, in common with all the other capitalist reform parties, the Labour Party is built on the basis of leaders and followers. The ignorance of a mass membership, whether in trade unions or not, is crucial to the elitist structure of a party that exists only to run capitalism.

Currently, the situation is aggravated by anti-terrorist hysteria, largely engineered by capitalist war policies pursued by the Labour Party in government. Blair's conference speech defended his stance of involvement in the war on Iraq and his 'anti-terror' policies. The ring-of-steel of armed police turned Brighton into a fortress town, and indeed the country as a whole 'enjoys' much the same conditions in the name of "*freedom and democracy*".



# Enter Mr Wolfgang

It is against this background of leadership, ignorance and capitalism that heckling is disallowed at Labour Party conferences.

Mr Walter Wolfgang (with apologies to Mozart) has been striking wrong notes for most of his adult life. He marched to Aldermaston with the first CND demonstration against nuclear weapons in the late 1950s. Then, a year later, he joined the Labour Party, the party which had laid the foundation for Britain to become a nuclear power.

Mr Wolfgang's idea was the foolhardy one of working inside the Labour Party to change its wars and weapons policies. This was his reason for heckling Jack Straw at the Brighton 'conference'. He might as well have joined the Vegans to convert them to eating meat.

This 82-year old man clearly has no understanding of the nature of capitalism. It is this system that produces the rivalries out of which nuclear and conventional weapons, and wars, arise. It is futile to seek to change the Labour Party. If they did not run capitalism, other such parties would, for as long as the working class are prepared to support their masters' system. Mr Wolfgang sees only effects – he has never considered getting rid of capitalism, and helping to establish Socialism where nations, war-machines, markets and profits would no longer exist.

Mr Wolfgang was forcefully thrown out of his own party's conference by bouncers, for heckling. He was prevented from returning to the venue by police, under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. This caused a sense of shock even among the media. CHANNEL 4 NEWS said: "*he could have died*". Tony Blair cast a sorry figure as a leader when he felt forced to apologise. Wolfgang was offered his pass back on the promise of no more disturbances.

A recent UN summit failed to define 'terrorism'. Heckling at a Labour Party conference could be submitted as an example.

The irony of this ludicrous incident was not lost on commentators, who told how the Wolfgang family had fled Nazi Germany in 1937 to escape persecution as Jews. In the war that started two years later, forty million people, mostly workers, died believing the stories about 'freedom and democracy'.

If workers then, instead of following leaders and killing each other for one gang of plunderers against another, had united as workers with common interests, we could have had Socialism instead of continuous wars, increasingly deadly weapons, and terrorism, and with 'anti-terror' laws being sold as instruments of 'freedom'.

NOTE:

A reader, E Teasdale, queried a statement we made in NO.56 (p26). We said that Lenin had declared that: "by themselves, the working class would take 1000 years to establish Socialism". Does Mr Teasdale have a point? Lenin was reported in John Reed's book as saying it would take at least 500 years. Whether he said 500 or 1000 years seems immaterial: clearly Lenin thought it would take donkey's years. Apologies to any who thought we had misled them on this detail.

[Back to top](#)

## The Well Directed Heckle

Originally, a heckler was someone in the textile trade who combed out flax or hemp fibres. Its more common meaning began in the early 19th century when unionised hecklers working in Dundee used to interrupt the person responsible for reading out the day's news. The word became associated with acerbic questions aimed at teasing or combing out the truth that the speaker might wish to conceal or avoid. Public speaking is a perquisite for getting over political ideas. Some people in the audience will be receptive to what is being said, others will not. Opponents will try to unsettle the speaker and to undermine what is being said. If a socialist wanted to speak in public, he had to learn to deal with hecklers.



Harry Young, an old member of The SPGB, had no difficulty with hecklers. At one Hyde Park meeting, a member of the audience used to continually try to disrupt the meeting with crude and unintelligent remarks. Harry would turn to the audience and, with one finger pointing at the disrupter, exclaim: “*I give you the intellectual wing of the Conservative Party*”. When told to go back to Russia, Harry would reply, “*I have been there and it does not work*”, a pointed reference to the Webbs.

Tony Turner, another old member, used to be confronted with a heckler demanding to know what he did for a living. “*A brain surgeon*”, came the reply. “*And now I am going to begin to work on your brain.*”.

Only those who had authoritarian leanings required violence to silence critics in an audience. It would have been a brave person to heckle at a Communist Party or Fascist meeting in the 1930s. Where politicians use paid thugs to stop dissent, questioning, and outbursts of anger in the form of a “*heckle*,” they have lost the argument.>

The SPGB has all its meeting open to the public. We encourage debate and the discussion of ideas. We silence no one. There are no paid thugs to drag out opponents from our meetings, no policemen to stop them trying to get back in again by using the latest Anti-Terrorism Act.

It used to be said that fascism in England would creep up unnoticed, wearing a bowler hat, pin-striped suit and rolled-up umbrella. Today the metaphor for authoritarianism and fascism is the Labour Party Conference which cannot allow dissent, its organisers for the crude use of violence to stop dissent, and its politicians for hiding behind this violence to deliver lies, half-truths and, yes, “*nonsense*”.

When Tony Blair was told that hired thugs reminiscent of the Fascist Brown Shirts in the 1930s had dragged out from the Labour Party Conference an 82- year old member of the Labour Party, he replied: “*I wasn’t there*”.

Well, the cameras were there. They showed the political violence, the intolerance, and the fear of open discussion in a closed and dogmatic political party which bends to the Will of its Fuehrer.

The cameras were also at a ‘conference’, which would have gained the admiration of Goebbels. There was no debate. No policy-making. When a vote went against the Government, it was ignored. Labour Party members taking the rostrum had their speeches written for them. *Control freakery* gone mad.

What of Walter Wolfgang, the elderly heckler? He and thousands like him in the Labour Party are useful idiots. By continuing to remain in the Labour Party, they keep this disreputable pro-capitalist organisation alive.

They are idiots for thinking that they have any power to create policy. They are idiots in believing that, when Tony “*I wasn’t there*” Blair goes, all will be rosy. The heir apparent, Gordon Brown, will, if ever he makes it into Number Ten, continue the policy of every other Labour government - running British capitalism in the interests of the capitalist class.

[Back to top](#)

## Truth Will Out - Shakespeare

“The Labour Party has never been a socialist party”. So said Tony Benn (THE INDEPENDENT, 19 August 2005). However, Tony Benn did not tell the whole truth. He went on to say: “... *but it [the Labour Party] has always had Socialists in it*”.

If Benn considers himself one of those ‘*Socialists*’, he should be reminded that he has *never* stood for common ownership and democratic control of the means of production by all of society. And he has *never* called for the abolition of the wages system.

If Benn meant that some Labour Party members came to realise that the party they were in was not Socialist and then left to join The SPGB, we would agree. But if he meant that the anti-working class party of which Benn is a member

has Socialists in it trying to change that party's direction, then we would question whether they were Socialists.

You cannot make the Labour Party into something it can never be. It supports British capitalism and it attacks the working class. If you want to build a better society, which has to mean social revolution, do not waste your time with the Labour Party.

[Back to top](#)

# Teaching Superstition and Dogma

George Bush wants '*intelligent design*' once known as '*creationism*' to be taught in US classrooms, side by side with evolution, so as to give students "*both sides of the debate*". Why stop there? Why not teach astrology side by side with chemistry, flat-earth views with cosmology, and Aristotelian physics with relativity?

What you will not hear Bush call for, in the name of fair play and balance, is socialism being taught along with capitalism, and a Marxian critique of economics being taught along with capitalist economics. Bush favours superstition and dogma rather than science and understanding. He also favours capitalism.

And the capitalism George Bush favours is the one he represents: US capitalism. A capitalism that pollutes the minds of school children by displaying a flag of hate, war and imperialism in the corner of the class room. A capitalism that forces the young to put hand on heart and sing the national anthem. Religion has never been banished from the classroom of US schools. The religion is US capitalism, the country favoured by a God dressed in stars and stripes, whose supposed existence underpins the Declaration of Independence.

Like capitalist economics, '*intelligent design*' is not science. The aim of capitalist economics is to teach that capitalism will last forever. The aim of '*intelligent design*' is to spread superstition about the real world in which the working class are an exploited class, and to spread confusion about evolution whose theory undercuts religion. Marx once called evolution the end of "*teleology*", as he raised his pint glass to Darwin..

The same can be said of the dogma of capitalist economics. Capitalist economics, for example, teaches that global warming is not caused by the scramble for profits because global warming threatens the doctrines of free markets and free trade. Capitalist economics teaches that its own subject matter has no history, as though capital has existed for all time. These economic charlatans refer to a Neolithic flint as "*capital*". Capital, like God, is supposed to have existed forever. And this pernicious dogma which asserts that "*there is no alternative to the market and buying and selling*" peddles the lie that we are burdened with scarcity, the original sin of being human, for which capitalism is the best of all possible worlds.

Scientific rigour demands continual questioning. No theory is sacrosanct. If an alternative theory to evolution which can answer both the questions evolution answers and those questions that it cannot, then evolutionary theory would have to be replaced by the better theory. The same applies to any scientific theory. That is why Socialists ask for public debate about our own position and that of those who support capitalism. We fear no attack on the scientific theory of Socialism and social evolution.

The same cannot be said for superstition and ideology. Creationists cannot admit that their theory could be wrong, and that God does not exist. Economists cannot admit that scarcity is socially constructed, and is deliberately created by commodity production and exchange for profit.

Despite the bleak and relentless indoctrination forced by capitalism on children, as Shakespeare wrote, "*truth will out*". Capitalism can never be made to work in the interest of all society. '*Intelligent design*' is barking rubbish.

[Back to top](#)

# Surely Not What The Good Lord Intended

In the US, fundamentalist Christianity has become dominant, so much so that it seems most Americans prefer Genesis and creationism to science, and think that a documentary film on penguin migration is enough to discredit evolution as “*a mere theory*”.

But how can the faithful explain the unexpected disasters that follow from their faith? Under the heading, THE FAITHFUL ON THE FRONT-LINE, about “*Texas’s dangerous churches*”, we read of weird consequences of their bizarre, primitive, symbolic, quasi-magical, rituals:

*Baptism, the Christian act of dipping people (usually tiny ones) in water... is known to be dangerous. Babies are sometimes almost drowned.... Kyle Lake, a pastor at a Baptist church in Waco, Texas, collapsed at the water tank in front of 800 of his horrified flock. [He] apparently grabbed the microphone while he was in the water – and was promptly electrocuted ...*

*Worshippers in the state are prone to horrifying incidents – most famously the explosion at the Davidians’ besieged compound in 1993... On a lesser scale, a row broke out in Austin... after a Catholic priest pricked the fingers of more than a dozen children during Mass with an unsterilised pin. The idea was to show the pain that Christ must have suffered on the cross ...but parents ...howled about possible HIV and hepatitis.* THE ECONOMIST, 5 November 2005

The parents’ protests about that “*unsterilised pin*”, used with the express purpose of deliberately inflicting pain on young children, were only on grounds of possible infection. They are not reported as objecting to this sadistic practice, a physical assault, from which surely any responsible parent or carer should be protecting their child. Worse, these parents seem to have had no objections to having their children’s minds polluted by this superstitious, sado-masochistic, ritual.

Dogmatic, religious brainwashing or indoctrination of the young is used to keep the next generation on their knees throughout life, metaphorically if not physically. They will, when young, be obedient to parents, parsons and teachers, and as adults they will obey, without question, employers and politicians. Which no doubt is why the Labour government is planning to control the care and teaching of working-class tiny tots and toddlers, from six months up.

[Back to top](#)

## Capitalism Causes Terrorism and War

On 11 September 2001, three civil aircraft were deliberately flown into buildings in Washington and New York. Several thousand people were killed. President Bush and Prime Minister Blair called for a “war against terrorism”. Afghanistan, whose terrorists the US had once financed and armed, was identified as the location of the suspects. Four years later, it was reported (22 August 2005) that over 100 ‘militant suspects’ had been killed in 3 weeks, and more than 50 US personnel had died in the past 6 months.

In Iraq, 100,000 people were killed in the US-led invasion, and since then under the occupation more than 25,000 have been killed. ‘Liberation’ equals blood for oil. President Bush declared: “*We will fight and we will win the war on terrorism*”(28 August 2005).

World capitalism spent £500 billion in 2004 on weapons to enable the rival sections of the capitalist class to continue plundering the earth and exploiting the working class for profits. Nationalism and religion are the smoke-screen behind which the agents of capitalism hide ugly realities. The spectacle of 8000 Jews being dragged kicking and screaming by their own army from occupied Gaza, where they have been with American support for 37 years, is one side of the conflict with Islamic extremism - the invasion of Iraq is the other. The background to Islamic terrorism is nationalism and power struggles.

The ‘war on terrorism’ serves capitalism’s need for a bogeyman to replace Nazism and ‘communism’ as a focus for workers’ hatred, diverting attention away from this predatory system. It is also used to ‘justify’ increasingly fascist legislation, heavily armed police, and the shoot-to-kill policy, which led to the cold-blooded killing of an unarmed Brazilian at a London tube station by the police, and their subsequent lying about it. The indiscriminate killing of 55

people in London (7 July 2005) was condemned as barbaric, which it was. Capitalism sets different standards for the lives of people it destroys. The chain reaction of cause and effect goes on.

*It is capitalism that causes terrorism. This insanity will continue until capitalism is replaced by Socialism.* Socialism means a system of society based on co-operation, not competition, on common-ownership of the world's resources; democratically controlled by the whole community; production for USE not profit; a classless society where war would be a thing of the past.

*The SPGB re-affirms that the interest of the working class – on whom the untold misery and suffering of conflict and war inevitably falls – lies in abolishing the cause of conflict.*

*Only world socialism can end wars and conflict by abolishing class relations and nation states.*

Capitalism is made up of competing nation states, some dominant like the US, others less strong but no less destructive when pursuing their 'national' interests. There is a continual conflict over resources like oil, over strategic points and trade routes. It is only within this framework that terrorism, national conflict, wars and civil wars have to be understood. As long as the world is organised on a capitalist economic basis, its never-ending rivalries will continue to produce conflict, varying from individual acts of terrorism to gigantic armed struggles spreading over all the oceans and continents of the world.

## SOCIALISM: A WORLD WITHOUT WAR

*To achieve Socialism the working class must wake up to reality and stop sleepwalking into yet more nightmares of terror. Not just to oppose war but to oppose capitalism, the cause of war, and to organise, worldwide, to end capitalism and establish Socialism through class-conscious, democratic, political action.*

The SPGB repeats a statement we issued on the outbreak of war in 1914:

*Having no quarrel with the working class of any country, we extend to our fellow workers in all lands, the expression of our goodwill and socialist fraternity and pledge ourselves to work for the overthrow of capitalism and the triumph of Socialism.*

The SPGB, August 25th 1914

**Workers of the World, Unite!**

Instead of merely protesting against war and its horrors, we urge you to join us in working to get rid of the social and political conditions which inevitably cause wars.

[NOTE: copies of this A4 leaflet are available on request.]

## POLITICAL LEADERS

As the Tories struggle – yet again – to choose another leader and, as Blair becomes increasingly like an ex-leader, Sir Peregrine Worsthorne, in a speech (THE INDEPENDENT, 6 November 2005), let the cat out of the bag:

*“...a party which champions policies that are in danger of sounding mean and ungenerous must lean over backwards to have leaders who do not look or sound mean or ungenerous. The nastier the policies, the nicer – in the sense of better-mannered, better-bred, sweeter tongued, in a word more gentlemanly - must be the politicians and journalists who espouse them.”*

[Back to top](#)

# Chinese Workers: Dying For a Profit

From the plush offices of the INDEPENDENT, a leader-writer recently scribbled out his thoughts on Chinese capitalism. He weighed up the pros and cons and came out in favour of a country that he thought was “*lifting millions out of poverty*”. His conclusion (6 September 2005) encapsulated the thinking of the 1980s: “*greed is good*” and was

evidence of “*the market virtue of the trickle-down effect from rich to poor*”.

The editorial is political dogma writ large. And it is wholly specious. Similar views can be found in the writings of the Manchester free trade school of economists in early 19th century Britain to justify capitalism’s alleged benefits for the working class. Marx answered the free-traders in two ways. First, he showed the shallowness of the argument that economic growth was beneficial to all classes, and second, he argued that the generation of social wealth under capitalism originated from class exploitation at the point of production.

*A house may be large or small; as long as the surrounding houses are equally small it satisfies all social demand for a dwelling. But let a palace arise beside a little house, and it shrinks from a little house to a hut. The little house shows now that its owner has only very slight or no demands to make; and however high it may shoot up in the course of civilisation, if the neighbouring palace grows to an equal or even greater extent, the occupant of the relatively small house will feel more and more uncomfortable, dissatisfied and cramped within its four walls.*

A noticeable increase in wages presupposes a rapid growth of productive capital. The rapid growth of the productive forces brings about an equally rapid growth of wealth, luxury, social wants, social enjoyments. This, although the enjoyments of the worker has risen, the social satisfaction that they give has fallen in comparison with the increased enjoyments of the capitalist, which are inaccessible to the worker, in comparison with the state of development of society in general.

Our desires and pleasures spring from society; we measure them, therefore, by society and not by the objects which serve for their satisfaction. Because they are of a social nature, they are of a relative nature (Marx, WAGE-LABOUR AND CAPITAL, 1849).

Wherever the capital-labour relationship exists, there are antagonistic class interests, class exploitation and class struggle. This state of affairs applies equally, regardless of whether the employer is the state, a corporation, a privately owned business or a private capitalist.

The ‘trickle-down effect’ is perhaps one of the greatest insults thrown at the working class. The implication is that the working class should be grateful to the capitalist class for employing them and allowing them to share part of the social wealth produced. In reality, wealth is created by the working class. What goes to the capitalist class as rent, interest and profit is unearned income. The capitalists are a parasitical class. The crumbs falling to the floor from their table might become bigger over time but they are still crumbs.

In any event, the theory simply is not true. The annual Human Development Report by the UN (published September 2005) shows that, while China is very successful in wealth creation, it has not enabled the poor to share in the process. A rapid decline in child mortality has therefore not materialised. Of course, the UN report does not highlight the fact that this wealth creation came from the exploitation of the working class.

When has an employer ever fallen over himself to meet the interest of his workers by voluntarily giving them higher pay and better working conditions? Workers have to struggle for higher wages and better working conditions. Workers use trade unions and the strike to further their economic interests.

## **The reality of Chinese capitalism**

The reality of Chinese capitalism is an altogether different from the rosy picture painted by the Independent leader writer. The workers from the countryside who have arrived in the cities have largely escaped from absolute poverty and oppression. Yet they work in the factories to punishing quota systems before they collapse into bed in their company-provided dormitories in the purpose-built factory towns that they hardly ever leave.

According to the journalist, Deborah Orr:

*Typically, they’ll get two days off a month, and a ten-day holiday at Chinese New Year. Even though they get a pittance for their labours, they feel rich, partly because they are earning 10 times what they would from working on the land, and partly because they have no time or energy left over to spend any of their money anyway*

(INDEPENDENT, 7 September 2005).

In an article, *Expose of Poverty in China Shames Regime* (THE DAILY TELEGRAPH, 25 February 2004), Richard Spencer also highlighted the sufferings of nearly one billion peasant farmers. A mass exodus is taking place which sees workers and their families driven into cities, to low-paid, often dangerous, jobs in the booming coastal provinces, or to equally low-paid jobs as migrant labourers in Europe and America.

Remember the 18 Chinese cockle-pickers who drowned at Morecambe Bay? Were they the beneficiaries of free market Chinese capitalism, so beloved by politicians and the media? They did not see the 'trickle-down effect' in China, and wanted out. But, in migrating, they simply went from the frying pan into the fire. Rather than being lifted out of poverty, workers in China are still in poverty, as wage-slaves locked within the exploitative wages system.

Of course, the DAILY TELEGRAPH wanted to have a poke at 'Communist' China. Yet China has as much to do with Marx's Communism as Hitler's Germany had with Darwin's theory of evolution. There has never been in China, or for that matter anywhere else in the world, common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all the people.

## The SPGB Vindicated

Ever since Mao's revolution in 1949, The SPGB has shown that China was a state capitalist country, and could only develop along lines determined by commodity production and exchange for profit. The working class in China were exploited in the same way as their fellow workers were exploited elsewhere in the world.

*The social relationships which now dominate China are those of wage labour and capital, the peasant class having been turned into rural wage-workers. The great majority of the population are members of the propertyless working class, forced to live by selling their labour power*

The SPGB, QUESTIONS OF THE DAY, 1978, p91

The workers in China are exploited in the way Marx described in CAPITAL. They produce a "surplus value". They endure exploitation through both absolute and relative surplus value. They are constrained by the wages system. They are forced into wage slavery by not owning and controlling the means of production.

As a consequence they receive a wage that barely sustains them and their families. And, as a class, they produce profit for capital, whether state or private, in excess of this wage.

The working class in China work under dreadful conditions of exploitation. Take the case of the coal industry. Digging out coal has cost the lives of more than 15 miners a day in China since the beginning of 2004 (BBC NEWS, 12 August 2005).

There have been 3000 deaths in mining accidents in the first six months from the beginning of 2005 (BBC RADIO, 4 September 2005). The employers have a ready-made source of replacement for the dead miners from the poor rural workers being swept off the land. Marx called it an industrial reserve army.

Workers in China cannot even legally organise into trade unions to struggle for better pay and working conditions. Amnesty International reported (April 2002):

*Throughout March and April 2002, workers' protests, strikes, demonstrations or factory occupations by disgruntled workers in China have been reported nearly every day. News of industrial accidents in which workers are killed or maimed are also frequently reported.*

*In many cases, peaceful protests by workers over pay and benefits have turned into pitched battles between the workers and armed police called to quell the protests, resulting in casualties and arrests. Labour activists have been arrested and often beaten. Some have been sentenced to long terms in prison.*

History shows that the law and state oppression cannot prevent workers organising together against a common class enemy, striking for better pay and working conditions, and even carrying on political activity as Socialists. The class



struggle continues, even under severe political restrictions. Imprisonment and legal enactments cannot stop the class struggle. It is a fact of life under capitalism whether in China or in Britain.

## Free-loading with Tony

So what about all the Maoist students of the 1970s who used to man the bookshops in London and other British cities? The bookshops selling Mao's pathetic thoughts have been replaced by the rants of Islamic extremists – although to hold any barmy religious belief is an extreme act of stupidity. A few ex-Maoists are now found in 'New' Labour in smart suits, drinking smart wine – Chablis bourgeois is a fitting name for the wine they drink – and dining in exclusive restaurants.

A few of New Labour's elite might have flown with the free-loader, Tony Blair, to China on a trade mission. They will not have been reading the thoughts of Chairman Mao but planning how to get British capital profitably invested in China, how to resolve the bra-wars, and how to make sure that British capitalism was well represented.

And well-represented it was. With Tony Blair were Sir Martin Sorrell (Chief Executive of WPP, Lord Foster (millionaire corporate architect to the rich), Sir Anthony Bamford (chairman of JCB), Jan Du Plessis (chairman of British American Tobacco), and Lord Powell of Bayswater, a former foreign policy advisor to Margaret Thatcher and now president of the China-British Business Council.

As they flew over China, they looked down on a country ripe for business opportunities and profit. A £1.5 billion Air Bus deal was one prize to be had, against fierce competition from the US. Off-loading cigarettes was another.

The delegation had no interest in free trade unions, the health and welfare of the working class in China, let alone the establishment of a socialist party with the abolition of the wages system and socialism as its only aim.

They did not see the conditions which the working class of China have to endure. They did not see the deaths and the bodies bought out of the mines. They just saw the profit.

## Chinese Capitalism Kills

Capitalism kills. You will not hear this fact, though, from politicians, economists and journalists. And you will certainly not hear it from Chinese politicians who are in political denial, erroneously believing that their country is not capitalist. But the Chinese government has been shamed into admitting the deaths caused by China's economic boom.

In 2004, there were 136,700 recorded industrial deaths in China (Chinese News Service, reported by CNN, 23 September 2005). According to official figures, 6,027 Chinese miners were killed last year alone, about 16 deaths a day. According to CNN, these figures are incomplete because mine operators often fail to report the deaths and "*pay off family members to keep them quiet*".

Deaths in Chinese coal mining since 1995 are reported as follows:

Mining Deaths in China

1995 5,990 dead

2002 5,791 dead

2004 5,990 dead

Sources:

Official government figures, IEA, and CHINA LABOUR BULLETIN

Such deaths will not stop the flow of investments into China from capitalists in the West, nor the enthusiasm by economists for China's growth rate.



There is no morality in profit-making. The working class, whether dead or alive, have never mattered to the “dismal science” of capitalist economics. As Marx noted (Capital vol. I, chap. XXIV), in all capitalist countries, the “*cash nexus*” is everything, and for the capitalists:

*Accumulate, accumulate! That is Moses and the prophets!... Accumulate for accumulation's sake, production for production's sake.*

Chinese capitalism is no different.

[Back to top](#)

## Free Trade, Protectionism or No Trade

Capitalism is riddled through with competing interests. The primary antagonism is between the capitalist class who own the means of production and the working class who do not. The resultant class struggle between capital and labour is, therefore, over the intensity and extent of exploitation. Politically, the class struggle is about the retention or abolition of capitalism.

However, different sections of the capitalist class have different interests. There are those who favour inflation, others deflation, and others a stable economy. Then there is the conflict between those who are importers and those who export. Some prefer high interest rates, others low interest rates. The capitalist political parties are but expressions of differing capitalist interests, largely around taxation and subsidy. And there is the international rivalry between nation states over trade routes, spheres of influence and raw resources.

Two interest groups are currently slugging it out; advocates of free trade and supporters of protectionism. The US is in favour of free trade but protects its steel industry. There is a trade war between the EC and China, leading to stockpiles of bras and other imports of clothes in European ports and customs warehouses.

Both factions call upon the working class for support. For example, a supporter of free trade, Stephen King, wrote that: “*Free trade is not perfect, but it's all we've got*” (INDEPENDENT, 12 September 2005). He went on to say that: “*workers may feel threatened but consumers benefit from lower prices*”. Free Traders have been saying this since the Corn Laws. They say nothing about the fact that workers are exploited at the point of production, whether there is free trade or protectionism.

Such calls for and against free trade should be ignored. The working class has no concern in the interests of the capitalist class as a whole or its various factions. The working class interest should be directed at abolishing capitalism and replacing the profit system with Socialism. Instead of free trade and protectionism, the workers should be politically and consciously organising for no trade: that is, the abolition of buying and selling, markets and production for profit.

## Free Trade and Protectionism

Free trade has been a dominant trend since Adam Smith and his disciples who believed that there was no need to produce a commodity if it could be bought more cheaply from abroad.

David Ricardo was also a supporter of free trade with his theory of comparative advantage. After the wars against Napoleon and revolutionary France, which included trade blockades, Ricardo's argument for free trade became seductive. John Stuart Mill even believed that protectionism actually damaged economies.

In 19th century Britain, Cobden and Bright spread free trade like a religion. According to Marx, one Dr. Browning: “*conferred upon all these (free-trade) arguments the consecration of religion by exclaiming at a meeting, “Jesus Christ is free trade, and free trade is Jesus Christ”*” (ON THE QUESTION OF FREE TRADE, p196).

After Robert Peel split the Tory Party over cheap food imports, the movement for the repeal of the Corn Laws won out against protectionism. When British capitalism was the “*workshop of the world*”, free trade was considered acceptable to much of the capitalist class.

However, once British capitalism found itself in competition from abroad, the Conservative politician, Joseph Chamberlain, called for protection. Ironically, one of the first propaganda films produced in 1903, in support for protectionism was called “*Fair Trade*”, a phrase now taken over by the latter day protectionists in the anti-capitalism movement.

And so the pendulum swings: at times towards free trade, at others towards protectionism.

Free traders like Ricardo ask: “*Why cannot the whole world go over to complete free-trade by abolishing all tariffs and all restrictions on imports and exports?*” If this were done, they say, then all commodities would be produced in those places where it is easiest and most economical to produce them, each area would concentrate on those commodities in which it had a natural or acquired advantage, and the world as a whole would be enriched and would escape the conflicts that presently effect capitalism.

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have studied the proposals for free trade and have given support. However, free trade is not a practical proposition, and the realities of capitalism have always subverted the doctrine.

Although free trade supporters have no understanding of capitalism, they cannot disregard the consequences of capitalism. This was the problem faced by the free trader, Peter Mandelson, when considering the threat to EC capitalist interests from cheap imports from China. The introduction of international free trade would mean, as its supporters intend that it should, the closing down of some industries in other countries and the corresponding growth in other countries.

It would involve the ending of glass manufacture in Italy to China, of clothing manufacture in France and Germany to China and so on. The result would be bankruptcy and unemployment in Italy, France and Germany.

But behind each industry there are vested interests which do not want to see their particular investments destroyed by foreign competition. Capitalists would oppose being deprived of their property and profits. They would get the support of their non-socialist workers by spreading propaganda about high unemployment. There would be politicians willing to give support.

There is also another problem about capitalism overlooked by free traders like Ricardo. And that is the problem of war. Each nation state has to be in a position to wage war. It cannot afford to lose to free trade industries which might be needed to produce arms.

Dominance in capitalism rests in the last resort on the power to wage war and that in turn rests on the possession of war industries such as steel, engineering and aircraft production. Which is why an advocate of free trade like President Bush sees nothing contradictory in subsidising and protecting those industries useful for the US to take its place in the world as a super-power.

It is precisely to guard against being put in a vulnerable position that every government encourages by tariffs, restrictions, subsidies and so on, the building- up within its borders, or under its protection, of the industries without which modern war cannot be waged.

The protectionist argument is similarly impractical. Economic theory, time and time, again comes up against the realities of capitalism and is found wanting.

Protectionism is impractical for the same reasons as free trade though it would work in the opposite direction. Under free trade, the weakest and least profitable industries would go to the wall. Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair both support this view: both are Manchester free traders – as the Labour Party and trade unions once were until the Webbs. The Labour Party took over free trade policies as successors to the Whigs/Liberals. In the 19th century, the Tories, representing the landed interest, advocated protection (e.g. the Corn Laws), while the Whigs, representing

manufacturers' interests, and wanting low wages, hence a low price of bread, advocated the repeal of the Corn Laws, and free trade policies which also helped their export trade. Labour is defined always mainly by its opposition to the Tories: when Tories advocate protection – later defined as Empire/Commonwealth preference – Labour put themselves forward as free trade enthusiasts. This is an example of Labour adopting the employers' policies, of Labour and the TUC identifying with the employers' interests.

Under protectionism, it would be the large and powerful export industries that would have to cut back on their economic activity. Such a proposal would be fought tooth and nail by export capitalists and their political representatives.

Both free trade and protectionism are two sides of the same capitalist coin. They both hold the same untenable illusion that you can organise capitalism to minimise conflict. And they peddle the lie that their economic theory should be supported by the working class. As Marx and socialists have shown, capitalism can never be run in the interests of the working class, whether under conditions of free trade or protectionism.

## Marx and Free Trade

A few months before the publication of the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO, Marx gave a speech to the Democratic Association of Brussels stating his considered views on free trade. Marx ridiculed the idea that the capitalists were philanthropists whose “*sole and express purpose*” was “*improving the condition of these same workingmen*” (p197). Marx pointed out that the working class has its own interests. He also pointed out that capitalism, with or without free trade: “*passes through the successive phases of prosperity, overproduction, crisis...*” (p197).

Free trade, for Marx, is nothing more than the freedom of capital.

*So long as you [the Free Trader] let the relation of wage-labour to capital exist, no matter how favourable the conditions under which you accomplish the exchange of commodities, there will always be a class which exploits and a class which is exploited* (p205).

Marx ridiculed the belief that free trade would abolish the class struggle between workers and capitalists. He concluded that the class struggle will stand out more clearly under conditions of free trade. Marx saw in early 19th century free trade a force that was useful in breaking down the last remnants of feudalism. He saw free trade as a means of hastening the Social Revolution. Marx was over-optimistic. There have been free trade and protectionist policies for 157 years and, although the class struggle has persisted, the working class are still tied to capital.

## Socialism and No Trade

The SPGB has never treated what Marx said as a religious utterance. The SPGB stands or falls on our Object and Declaration of Principles. There is nothing “*progressive*” now in free trade. Socialists are not in favour of free trade any more than Socialists are in favour of protectionism. Our work is directed towards building up a Socialist majority necessary to abolish capitalism and establish Socialism.

And by Socialism we mean the abolition of labour markets, the buying and selling of labour power, the private ownership of the means of production and the class relationship between capital and labour. In short, Socialists do not want trade at all, whether “*free*” or “*protected*”.

Socialism means the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society. Production will be purely for social use and not profit. Workers will never have their needs met while being tied to capital. Only Socialism will allow their potential to be realised. Opponents of Socialism cannot or will not get outside their “*bourgeois*” skin, and understand the reasonable and practical socialist proposition about production and distribution.

The proposition is that world resources will be used without the impediment of national boundaries to feed, clothe, house and sustain the entire population of the globe. Social need will be met whenever and wherever it exists.

Our opponents, whether supporters of Free Trade or protectionism, cannot conceive of a world without trade because their minds are closed to anything but commodity production and exchange for profit. Their minds are so polluted by ruling-class ideas and beliefs that they cannot conceive of anything but capitalism.

Let opponents of Socialism keep their ideas and beliefs. In the face of a power socialist movement they are irrelevant. The working class has nothing to lose in embracing consciously and politically revolutionary change. To meet the needs of all people requires freedom from capital and the profit motive. Freedom is only a revolution away.

If the lesson of free trade and protectionism can teach the working class anything, it is that capitalism can never be made to work in their interests, and that Socialism is the only answer to their problems.

### THE CAPITALIST WORLD-MARKET

*The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all... nations into civilisation. The cheap prices of its commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls... It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production... In one word, it creates a world after its own image.*

*The bourgeoisie has subjected the country to the rule of the towns. It has created enormous cities, has greatly increased the urban population as compared with the rural... The bourgeoisie...has agglomerated population, centralised means of production, and has concentrated property in a few hands. The necessary consequence of this was political centralisation.*

Marx and Engels, THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO

[Back to top](#)

## Reading Adam Smith Through The Eyes Of Karl Marx

William Rees-Mogg, capitalism's defender of the faith, pontificates from his Monday TIMES pulpit on all manner of subjects. His speciality is economics. Whether he is droning on about the gold standard, the collapse of capitalism through Kondratyev's misleading wave theory, or prematurely celebrating the end of Marx's ideas, the reader is often left asking if this is the best apology capitalism has to offer.

A recent wheeze was Lord Rees-Mogg's suggestion (THE TIMES, 11 April 2005) that he might send the new Pope a copy of Adam Smith's THE WEALTH OF NATIONS

*I've often noticed how Bishops of all denominations have never read Adam Smith, but know intuitively that they disagree with him. My first thought, therefore, was that I might send a copy of THE WEALTH OF NATIONS as an inaugural present to the next pope, whoever he might be.*

He even thought of sending Prince Charles a copy for his wedding-night. What a card.

Never the one for facts, Lord Mogg believes that Adam Smith founded economics. Wrong. The father of political economy was William Petty. Petty was the first to sketch out the outlines of a labour theory of value although Marx rightly gave Aristotle some plaudits for first grappling with the problem, some 2000 years previously. Petty impressed Marx with his dictum: "*Labour is the Father and active principle of Wealth, as Lands are the Mother*" (ECONOMIC WRITINGS, p68).

No matter how ground-breaking Smith's own economic theory, it was nevertheless a reaction to previous economic doctrines, not a precursor to something new. As I I Rubin pointed out, "*the truly valuable kernel in Smith's ideas*" was developed by Marx while "*its collateral offshoots were exploited by the so-called 'vulgar economists'*" (A HISTORY OF ECONOMIC THOUGHT, p196). The latter trend has passed right on down to Hayek and his liberal economic followers

As Marx wryly noted about Smith's ideas, Smith could never get outside his "*bourgeois skin*". Political economy, then as now, was and is generated and sustained by the class struggle. Economics is the boss's economics, which one

generation of economists slavishly and uncritically passes on to the next. It was only Marx, with his materialist conception of history, labour theory of value, and political concept of the class struggle who could understand and explain capitalism as having a history and termination in the class struggle. You will not find an economic text book concluding with the revolutionary cry: “*abolition of the wages system*”.

## The Poverty of Hayek’s Theory of Price Information

In his article, Lord Mogg also stated that Smith’s greatest contribution was to set out a theory of competition free from state interference, one which was theoretically completed by the Austrian economist, Frederick Hayek in two books, *THE USE OF KNOWLEDGE IN SOCIETY* (1945) and *COMPETITION AS A DISCOVERY PROCEDURE* (1968).

There is a slight problem with Hayek’s texts, a problem completely overlooked by Lord Mogg. And it is this. Both books are fatally flawed. For Hayek, information is essentially subjective; it is knowledge in people's minds. There then arises the problem of how information that is dispersed in the minds of many can, through the operations of the market, be combined for the common good when all the evidence around the world demonstrates that this is not the case.

By taking this crude subjectivist standpoint, attention is diverted away from the very practical and important question of the technical supports for information dispersal, from books to computers. To accept Hayek’s subjective view of knowledge, it becomes impossible to see the production and manipulation of information as both a technology and a social labour process in its own right. The dissemination of information is part of the forces of production, and capitalism acts as a barrier against information, just as it does to other areas of production including labour power. Like Smith’s harmonious “*invisible hand*”, Hayek’s “*spontaneous market order*” is a fiction.

The poverty of Hayek’s information theory can be seen in the one-sidedness of the price mechanism used as “*information*”. To all intents and purposes, borne out by lived experience and not by arcane academic theory, the price mechanism is incapable of providing any meaningful information about the effects of commodity production and exchange for profit, outside very narrow limits.

But there have been many trade depressions which economists, politicians and capitalists have been powerless to foresee and prevent, just as food is periodically destroyed, agricultural land taken out of production and commodities stockpiled, because there is no market. Price information also provides poor information for decision-making, and markets obstruct the flow of useful information, through trade secrecy and the use of dishonest “*life-style*” advertising where rational information is replaced by imagery and fantasy.

Computer programmes and information technology could incorporate for a future Socialist society the effects of changes brought about by individual and social need, choice of productive techniques and democratically arrived at decisions, in a way that completely eludes the price mechanism of the market.

Non-market information on production and distribution techniques has a number of real advantages over market prices with respect to calculation. A Socialist society could respond to changing parameters brought about by democratic decisions, outside the scope of an individual capitalist firm based on the narrow interests of profit-making. Production could be adjusted to take account of the anticipated effects of long-term development plans. And a Socialist society could include social consequences, environmental and health implications, etc. which are manifestly by-passed by capitalist production in its anti-social drive for profit.

## Reading Adam Smith as a Marxist

Defenders of capitalism, like Lord Rees-Mogg and his hero, Hayek, have skewed Smith’s book in favour of the capitalist class. *THE WEALTH OF NATIONS* should instead be read, not through the eyes of Lord Rees-Mogg, Hayek, or the misnamed Adam Smith Institute, but through the eyes of Karl Marx who did understand Smith. Marx’s

writings serve as an excellent place to start reading Smith's work. Students who are about to embark on reading Marx's four volumes of CAPITAL should do so with a copy of THE WEALTH OF NATIONS and Ricardo's PRINCIPLES OF POLITICAL ECONOMY at hand.

Smith's importance lies not in his erroneous theory of market harmony but instead in his setting out a primitive labour theory of value. You will not find Rees-Mogg underlining this part of THE WEALTH OF NATIONS for the next pope or future king. Here is a passage of some interest:

*Every man is rich or poor according to the degree in which he can afford to enjoy the necessities, conveniences, and amusements of human life. But after the division of labour has once thoroughly taken place, it is but a very small part of these with which a man's own labour can supply him. The far greater part of them he must derive from the labour of other people, and he must be rich or poor according to the quantity of that labour which he can command, or which he can afford to purchase. The value of any commodity, therefore, to the person who possesses it, and who means not to use or consume it himself, but to exchange it for other commodities, is equal to the quantity of labour which enables him to purchase or command. Labour, therefore, is the real measure of the exchangeable value of all commodities.* THE WEALTH OF NATIONS Vol. 1, Book 1, chap. 5 - The Price of Commodities

Crude, but an intellectual enquiry utterly lacking from today's economics text books. Marx's reply is worth quoting in full:

*Although Adam Smith determines the value of commodities by the labour-time contained in them, he then nevertheless transfers this determination of value in actual fact to pre-Smithian times. In other words, what he regards as true when considering simple commodities becomes confused as soon as he examines the higher and more complex forms of capital, wage-labour, rent, etc. He expresses this in the following way: the value of commodities was measured by labour-time in the paradise lost of the bourgeoisie, where people did not confront one another as capitalists, wage-labourers, landowners, tenant farmers, usurers, and so on, but simply as persons who produced commodities and exchanged them. Adam Smith constantly confuses the determination of the value of commodities by the labour-time contained in them with the determination of their value by the value of labour; he is often inconsistent in the details of his exposition and he mistakes the objective equalisation of unequal quantities of labour forcibly brought about by the social process for the subjective equality of the labours of individuals.*  
A CONTRIBUTION TO THE CRITIQUE OF POLITICAL ECONOMY, p59

## The Anarchy of Capitalist Production

What Lord Rees-Mogg does believe - and it is a belief of almost theological proportions - is that the free market leads through Smith's "*hidden hand*" to economic harmony. He concludes that capitalism works and socialism does not. However, Smith's harmony was being criticised long before Marx began his study of political economy.

Thomas Ainsworth, contemplating the depression in the British cotton trade which followed the Napoleonic wars, saw a deep gulf between Smith's theory of market harmony and the reality of the market faced by real men and women. Ainsworth wrote:

*Did Dr. A Smith ever contemplate such a state of things? It is vain to read his book to find a remedy for a complaint which he could not conceive existed, viz. 100,000 weavers doing the work of 150,000 when there was no demand (as 'tis said) and that for half meat, and the rest paid by the poor rates.*

J L and B Hammond, THE SKILLED LABOURER 1760-1832, 2nd edn

Marx was to show in the first volume of CAPITAL that Smith's "*invisible hand*" was not harmonious because no seller can be sure of finding a buyer in the market. If the time period is long, the seller cannot realise a profit and has to lay off workers and, if the period of time is too long, then he goes bankrupt. Generalised over several industrial sectors, sellers not being able to sell and realise profit would mean capitalism passing into an economic crisis, with bankruptcies and mass unemployment.



Marx was able to explain economic crises and other features of capitalism because he developed from Petty, then Smith and Ricardo, a labour theory of value which he applied to labour itself. This revolutionary move - a piece of brilliant scientific insight - Marx could only have achieved through his theory of history, the “*guiding thread for his studies*”.

## From Smith to Marx

In his CRITIQUE OF POLITICAL ECONOMY and CAPITAL - books wasted on lords, popes and princes - Marx raised many objections to the ‘classical’ theory of value held by Smith and others. The first objection relates to the distinction between labour and labour-power. If, The first objection relates to the distinction between labour and labour-power. If, as economists claimed, labour-time is the measure of value, how are wages to be determined? The error of Petty, Smith and others was to treat labour as a commodity and not as an activity. Instead, *labour-power* is the commodity which is sold by the working class to the capitalist class. Marx then applied his labour theory of value to production, and showed that the wages system was a social relationship of exploitation, peculiar to capitalism, in which the capitalist class derived their unearned income from rent, interest and profit.

The second criticism involved exploitation and the theory of capital. In the chapter on “*The Rate of Surplus-value*”, Marx showed that the working class worked, not only “necessary labour time” in which they produced the value of their wage, but they also worked “*surplus labour time*” in which they produced surplus value. From this, Marx was able to demonstrate a rate of surplus value, giving “*an exact expression for the degree of exploitation of labour-power by capital, or of the labourer by the capitalist*” (CAPITAL Vol I, chapter 9, section 1).

Marx did not write for the capitalist class. Marx was a revolutionary socialist. He did not send his books to popes and princes. What he did do was to subject the political economists to a thorough critique in order to demonstrate the historical motion of capital from one crisis to the next, until such time as a socialist working class will abolish it. In doing so, he wrote for someone capable of thinking for himself. Not, we imagine, a Lord Rees-Mogg.

### NIGER’S FAMINE – PREDICTED AND PREVENTABLE

We found reports on this in the French press (LE PROLETAIRE, June-July, and LIBERATION, 22 July 2005). In Niger (pop. 12m), one of the poorest sub-Sahel states, food aid was blocked from those in need. The international NGO, MSF, reported in July that: “*Niger’s authorities in cahoots with big business calculated that, if food was distributed free, this would make the situation worse and would destabilise the millet market*”. This policy to block food aid, endorsed by the EU and the UN, meant, as “*many families are too poor to buy food... 3.5 million people will face starvation to prevent an infringement of the laws of the market, i.e. [to protect] the interests of the... capitalists*”. As Engels wrote (letter to Lange, 1865), production is determined “*not by the number of hungry bellies but by the number of purses able to buy and to pay*”, i.e. not by human need but by economic demand – the rest are “*left to the death-rate*”. Capitalism’s priority is still the same – profits. Then, as now.

[Back to top](#)

## In Terror of Marx

There is a spectre haunting the capitalist class. And that spectre is Karl Marx.

The capitalist class thought they had got rid of Marx following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Lenin was certainly eclipsed. Who reads Lenin any more? But go into the main bookshops, and Marx is in the classics section or in the politics section. If his books were not being bought, they would not be on the shelves to be sold. He is required reading in universities. His ideas still matter because his analysis of capitalism is on the ball.

So it comes as no surprise to read Professor John Gray bemoaning the fact that Marx’s ideas are alive and well. In a review of Terry Eagleton’s book, HOLY TERROR, John Gray wrote:

... *He [Terry Eagleton] has a blind spot when it comes to terror perpetrated in the service of Socialist ideals*



(INDEPENDENT, 16 September 2005).

In his book, Eagleton argued that “*socialists have always rejected the tactics of terror*”, as indeed they have from the inception of The SPGB in 1904 onwards. Professor Gray responded: “*as if Lenin was a fringe figure in the history of Socialism and in no way involved in constructing the Soviet apparatus of state terror*”.

But Lenin was involved in the construction and use of state terror. The Cheka was his invention. It has been estimated that between 100,000 and 500,000 people were executed by the Cheka during the Red Terror.

Although the secret police was officially formed as the Cheka (VChK: the Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counterrevolution and Sabotage) in December 1917, shortly after the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia, its origins go back to the earliest tsarist times. Ivan the Terrible, Russia’s first Tsar, established his secret police, the Oprichniki in 1565.

In 1924 the Cheka was renamed the OGPU or United State Political Administration. Dzerzhinsky and most of the leaders of the old Cheka remained in the new GPU. Like the Tsarist secret police, the Okhrana under Nicholas II, the GPU was made a part of the Ministry of Interior (MVD), where it stayed in its many guises for the following decades.

But Lenin was no Socialist. He rejected Marx’s central political idea that Socialism was to be the work of the working class alone. Lenin thought that Socialism could be imposed by a dedicated minority elite of professional revolutionaries.

Lenin was utterly wrong. Socialism cannot be imposed by an elite any more than Socialism can grow out of a backward, peasant-based society

Gray ended his review with this contemptuous remark:

*It may be Eagleton subscribes to the academic cliché that the former Soviet Union had nothing to do with socialism but was another version of Russian despotism*

Well, Professor Gray knows about the existence of The SPGB. He has been invited to debate against The SPGB but cites as his reason not to debate as his being “*too busy*”. He also should know that The SPGB, from 1918 onwards, demonstrated that the Soviet Union had nothing to do with Socialism but everything to do with state capitalism. We know this because he has been sent Socialist literature to support this fact.

Professor Gray is just another dogmatist who does not want to let reality into his cosy world of fiction. Here is his pitiful argument against Eagleton’s belief that Socialism cannot be established through terror:

*... this runs against the awkward fact that state terror has been a feature of all communist [sic] regimes. Soviet Mongolia, the German Democratic Republic and Stalinist Poland had very different cultures, but during the communist [sic] era all suffered show trials, mass imprisonment and a ubiquitous secret police. Terror cost many more lives in Russia and China than elsewhere, but one reason for this is that, for a time, the communist [sic] programme was carried out further in them than in other countries. The millions of people who died there did so not because the communist [sic] project was compromised or deformed but because it was consistently pursued.*

Socialists do not deny that the countries Professor Gray highlights did indulge in show trials, mass imprisonment and a “*ubiquitous*” secret police.

But, and here is the point, there was no communist programme actively being pursued. No state capitalist country had a programme of common ownership of the means of production and distribution by all of society; the abolition of the wages system, and a society of free men and women producing to meet need.

The utopianism of state capitalism, that a party elite could create a society which met the needs of all society, was flawed from the beginning. You can force a person through terror to do a lot of things; to kill others, to degrade themselves, to march behind weapons of mass destruction, to cheer leaders, and to remain cowed and humiliated. But

what you cannot force them to do is to become a socialist.

In Russia and its empire, the working class were tied to capital. In fact Lenin introduced the capitalist managerial technique of “*Taylorism*”. There were no Socialists in socialist parties actively calling for the abolition of the wages system. The programme pursued by the state was to keep the working class as a working class, not to liberate it from employers. And, of course, the constant feature found in countries like Russia, when state capitalism passed on into more private hands, was a non-socialist working class still pumping out surplus value to create profits. The other constant feature was the use of the state machinery to protect the means of production for the benefit of a few as opposed to the needs of the majority.

Politically, a principal feature of Socialist thought has been for the working class to set up political parties throughout the world with the express aim of abolishing the wages system. Where wages exist, there is class exploitation. This was demonstrated by Marx in *CAPITAL* and in his other writings. So, it does not matter whether a nation state describes itself as “*Communist*”, “*Socialist*”, “*Capitalist*” or “*Islamic*” because, from the interests of the working class, while the wages system exists, workers are experiencing exploitation. They produce more than they receive in wages and salaries. The needs of the working class go unmet.

The “*Socialist ideal*” is to get rid of class exploitation. Yet apologists like John Gray say very little about class exploitation. Communism/Socialism and politics generally is not something he believes the working class should get involved in. The working class should be led, preferably by people approved of by the likes of John Gray.

In many ways, John Gray shares the elitism of Lenin and those who followed Lenin. Politically, for the Grays of the world, the working class do not count for much. This was never the view of Marx: the working class were a central feature, acting as a “*class for itself*”.

Marx showed that the working class is an exploited class wherever the wages system exists, and that it has a unique class interest in acting consciously and politically to abolish the world-wide profit system, and replace it with a world-wide social system based on production for use. This is the case, whether the working class are found in a dictatorship or so-called liberal democracy, whether they are employed by the state, corporations, families or individuals. The point is that they remain an exploited class.

Socialism/Communism has therefore never existed. No working class majority understanding and desiring Socialism has ever existed - so far. As a consequence, Marx’s ideas are as relevant today for the working class as they were when he first published them. That is the terror that haunts the capitalist class. The nightmare which scares the wits from them is to be constantly surrounded by their gravediggers.

[Back to top](#)

## Our Reply To The CPGB

Prompted by the party’s centenary, the so-called Communist Party of Great Britain, or rather one of its fragments, has at last decided to join with the growing throng of muddled anti-socialists in writing inane criticisms of The SPGB.

They head their pitiful attack: “*100 Years of Solitude*”. Yes, the party of Socialism has studiously avoided the company of anti-socialist enemies of the working class, and these of course would include the so-called Communist Party.

Unlike the CPGB, The SPGB never bore allegiance to a foreign police-state dictatorship like the former Soviet Union, and so we have never had to disappear from public meeting places for weeks on end, as they did in 1956 when Soviet tanks rolled into Hungary to crush a rising against Russian tyranny. Neither did we have to hide while getting the “*party line*” right, when Russia crushed another revolt in Czechoslovakia in 1968, when Alexander Dubcek, the Czech leader, was flown to Moscow in handcuffs.

Taking their cue always from their Soviet masters, the CPGB changed their attitude to World War II three times.

First, they supported the war and posed as anti-fascists. Then, on 22 August 1939, when Soviet Russia made a pact of peace and friendship with Nazi Germany, they opposed the war, calling it an “*imperialist war*”, and published a pamphlet entitled “WHY THIS WAR?” Finally, when their Soviet motherland was attacked by Germany in June 1941, they published another pamphlet on “HOW TO WIN THE WAR”, and could not urge workers into the slaughter loudly enough.

First, the DAILY WORKER in March 1939 headlined:

*Communists appeal to Attlee, Sinclair and Churchill - urged to defeat cabinet and form new government.*

Then when the Stalin/Hitler Pact came, Harry Pollitt and others made abject confessions of error for failing to see the imperialist nature of the war and, on 10 May 1940 when those three British leaders did form a government, the DAILY WORKER denounced Labour for associating with Churchill saying: “*What a man to take under the wing of the Labour Party!*” and urged workers to fight against Labour participation in Churchill’s new government. Quotations from QUESTIONS OF THE DAY, The SPGB pamphlet, 1953 edition

Yet only a year later, when Germany attacked Russia, the slavish CPGB returned to supporting the war, and Churchill’s government.

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH (14 October 1941) recorded that a Communist deputation went to the Tory Headquarters at Lancaster to offer support for the National Conservative candidate in the by-election. Harry Pollitt spoke at Newark in support of the Tory candidate on 7 June 1943, and Willie Gallagher - an erstwhile commie MP - admitted their treachery in a 1945 General Election special saying:

*In by-elections we have supported candidates whatever their particular label who were behind the government in carrying on the war through to a finish in alliance with the Soviet Union.*

Quoted in QUESTIONS OF THE DAY, 1953 edition, p79

Pollitt’s and the CPGB’s line was in opposition to war-time strikes, claiming that “*strikes do not harm the employers...*” (Pollitt’s pamphlet, WHERE DOES BRITAIN STAND, p12, quoted in QUESTIONS OF THE DAY, p80))

In post-war years, when Russia’s relationship with Western capitalism worsened again, support for strikes and “*peace campaigns*” became CPGB policy.

## Promoting Confusion

Following all these contortions was the Moscow-controlled Daily Worker, more renowned for its racing tips and sports news than for anything else. Frequently finding itself unable to keep pace with the twists and turns of Russia’s policy, Harry Pollitt and Palme Dutt had to make embarrassing retractions. Its readers had to buy another daily paper to have any idea of what was really happening in the world.

In 1920, at its inaugural Conference, the CPGB voted to seek affiliation with the Labour Party. For the next four years, they alternated between open opposition to and unconditional support for the anti-working class Labour Party.

## International Anarchy

The so-called Third (Communist) International statutes were drawn up in Moscow in August 1920, and published in London by the CPGB. The *Statutes and Conditions of Affiliation* include the following:-

*The aim of the Communist International is to organise an armed struggle for the overthrow of the international bourgeoisie and the establishment of an international Soviet Republic as a transition to the complete abolition of the Capitalist State.* Quoted in QUESTIONS OF THE DAY, 1932 edition, p59

How many of their current members are aware of these failed aims? Not only has the CPGB failed to establish a Soviet Republic but their guiding light, the Soviet Union, has itself been extinguished. 80 years of wasted working-class time!

Lenin and the other Bolsheviks who wrote those statutes did not even know that the ‘abolition of the state’ is an anarchist aim, not a Socialist one (see Engels, letter to Cuno, 1872).

The CPGB helped popularise the lie of “*Socialism in One Country*”, and promoted the myth that Socialism was the ‘lower’ phase and Communism the ‘higher’ phase. They thus created the false distinction between the meaning of the two terms in order to explain away the obvious features of capitalism persisting in Russia, including a powerful state machine.

In so doing, they deliberately falsified Marx and Engels, who nowhere ever distinguished Socialism from Communism: see SOCIALISM, UTOPIAN AND SCIENTIFIC, and THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO in the 1888 Preface to which Engels specifically says the terms mean the same thing.

The CP, from Lenin and Trotsky onwards, has been dedicated to promoting leaders: proof of their reliance upon working class ignorance since only the leaders know the way. It also shows that they have never stood for Socialism or understood its implications.

*All historical movements were movements of minorities, or in the interest of minorities. The proletarian movement is the self-conscious independent movement of the immense majority.* THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO

And Engels wrote, in his 1888 Preface to the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO:

*... our notion, from the very beginning, was that the ‘emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself’.*

It is very clear that the CPGB, as well as Lenin and the Bolsheviks, was a movement of a minority to gain power over workers, not the movement of a conscious majority to end power through emancipation.

## Leftist Reformism is not Socialism

In their letter to us, our CP opponents describe The SPGB as “*the country’s oldest Marxist group*”. We reject the “*group*” designation, and if, by Marxist, they mean that we have one aim, Socialism, the abolition of capitalism together with the wages-system, markets and profits, to be achieved by the conscious political action of a working-class majority, then we are not only the oldest, but the *only* Marxist party in the UK.

Their scribe goes on to say that we are “*...regarded by the rest of the Left as a political fossil*”. Since the so-called “*Left*” in all its forms is reformist and The SPGB is revolutionary, we have never been part of the Left.

It is worth noting that part of the definition of a fossil is that it is “*unchanging*”. This is something that cannot be said of the opportunist CPGB and the rest of the Left. They have always changed with the prevailing wind, particularly if it blew from Russia, and they have all stood for anything and everything except Socialism.

Nowhere is the political ignorance of the CPGB more clearly illustrated than in their remarks about a Socialist Party being confined to propagandist and “*abstract campaigning for Socialism*”.

We are charged with believing: “*...the pursuit of class struggles for gains that can be won under capitalism is an unnecessary distraction from propagating the Socialist solution*”. This is the class reformist position. After more than eighty years, the CPGB still thinks the class struggle is about gains to win under capitalism. No examples are given of gains won under capitalism but, whatever these may be, they leave the workers still an exploited class of wage-slaves in a world of poverty and war. This is all the CPGB aspires to.

The class struggle is about the ownership and control of the means of production and distribution, about ending the

exploitation of wage-labour by making the means of living the common property of society as a whole.

They evade the reality of their slavish history of following Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin, and they try to wriggle out of it with this statement:

*The SPGB's belief that the SWP, SP, CPGB, etc think that Socialism can be established in Britain against the will of the majority and without mass workers' democracy is wishful thinking.*

The fact is that none of those has ever advocated Socialism. Nationalisation, i.e. state capitalism, is what they frequently pass off as Socialism, plus day-to-day reforms in a “*meantime*” that lasts forever.

Their new-found love of ‘democracy’ should deceive nobody. Wherever they have held power, ‘democracy’ has come out of the barrel of a gun. Can they tell us, how many workers were shot in the back climbing over the Berlin Wall to escape from the joys of their Soviet paradise? Socialism for the CPGB meant Soviet H-Bomb rockets trundling through Red Square every May Day and October anniversary. They said that these weapons were for “*Peace and Socialism*”. They even lacked the self-respect to realise, that those rockets were pointed at them.

The SPGB challenges the CPGB to a public debate on “*Which Party Stands for Socialism*”.

[Back to top](#)

## Is Socialism Dead?

According to the journalist, Nick Cohen, “*Socialism is Dead*” (OBSERVER, 14 August 2005). Is it true or is it just wishful thinking?

Like most assertions there is little to go on. But let us suppose that Mr Cohen meant the type of political system in Russia where large scale nationalisation took place, where the state owned most industries and employed most workers. That type of politics, associated with Lenin, the Bolsheviks and their successors, is dead and finished. Leninism is buried under the rubble of the Berlin Wall.

In fact, Cohen has already remarked on the death of “Marxism-Leninism”:

*Marxism-Leninism is as dead as any idea can be - it made the fatal blunder of putting its ideas into practice and died of shame. Fifty years ago, there were revolutionary socialist movements in dozens of countries ready to take power. Today there isn't one, and the world is a better place for that. The nobler traditions of the social-democratic left are also under enormous strain. It seems that Tony Blair or Gordon Brown is about as good as it can get in Britain. Europe has leaders who appear more left-wing on paper, but to date they have failed to pull the Continent away from stagnation.*

NEW STATESMAN, 14 August 2004

Socialists would agree with Mr Cohen that Leninism is dead, and that state capitalism is dead. However, we would argue that neither the writings of Lenin, the politics of Bolshevism, nor the nationalisation policies of the Labour Party were anything to do with Marx and Socialism.

From the interests of the working class, it does not matter if they are exploited by the state or by individual capitalists: they still produce more wealth than they receive in their pay packets. Where there is wage labour, there is class exploitation and class struggle. And, unlike Lenin's elitism, Marx stressed that the establishment of Socialism had to be the work of the working class and no one else. He also asserted that Socialism means the abolition of the wages system.

Of course, it is doubtful if Mr Cohen would accept the Socialist argument being put here. What Cohen will not accept is that the social democracy of the Left has nothing to do with Socialism.

The capitalist left made a huge mistake. They believed that, if well-meaning intellectuals took power, the working

class could carry on being the working class while they, the intellectuals, could amend capitalism through an infinite array of reforms. This was crass utopianism and, as Socialists predicted, it would end in failure. It did. The Left are now left behind by history.

Still being generous to Mr Cohen's assertion that socialism is dead, we could agree that the nationalisation policies of the Labour Party, up to Blair and the 'tax and spend' policies of previous Labour governments, no longer exist. Blair is a supporter of free trade and free markets. He, like Thatcher, is an economic liberal, and that is the direction he has taken the Labour Party, away from the failure of the Keynesian 'command economy' favoured by his predecessors. The politics of 'Old Labour' may be as dead as the dodo but Socialists would argue that past Labour policies had nothing to do with Socialism.

If Nick Cohen was referring to the failed policies of strong or weak state capitalism, then Socialists would agree with him. They may well be dead. But they never had anything to do with Socialism. The argument for Socialism is alive and kicking. There has never been a country in which common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society has existed or currently exists. Cohen admits that the problems facing the world are still here. If the social problems caused by capitalism still exist, so too does the Socialist solution.

For Socialism to have died as an idea, the class struggle would no longer exist, the capitalist class would have ceased to increase the extent and intensity of exploitation, and there would be harmony between the social relations of production and the forces of production. However, all over the world, the capitalist class try to extract more and more surplus value from the working class. The class struggle exists all over the world, wherever capital confronts labour. The waste of capitalism, along with the billions unemployed, demonstrates that private ownership of the means of production holds back the potential to create a society without poverty, war and hunger.

Socialism has never existed to fail or to be pronounced "*dead*". A working-class *Socialist* majority has never existed to desire, and actively struggle for, the establishment of Socialism.

Cohen now belongs to a political formation of politicians, economists and capitalists who see capitalism as lasting forever. They make the old mistake, first noted by Marx:

*the bourgeois man is to them the only possible basis of every society; they cannot imagine a society in which men have ceased to be bourgeois.*

Letter to P V Annenkov, Dec. 1846

The politics of Cohen's youth might be dead but so too is the conservative politics he now embraces in middle age, a conservatism that declares there is no alternative to capitalism. We should recall that Cohen, a supporter of the war in Iraq, also wrote: '*there is an Iraqi government in waiting, and its leader is Ahmad Chalabi.*'

[Back to top](#)

## Q & A: Help - *One* Socialist Party

[NOTE: This email was received during the 2005 General Election.]

*Socialists ought to know better than anybody that the people should be united against capitalism.*

*There is one Labour (?) Party, one Tory Party and one Lib Dem Party.*

*So what chance do socialists stand with 5 socialist parties standing for this election?*

*UNITE and give socialism the chance it deserves. Speak with one clear ideal and people will respond.*

*I would vote socialist but which party do I vote for ? There can only be one if we are to succeed!!! I will vote for a socialist party when there is ONE.*

Regards, Stuart Ledger

OUR REPLY: Thank you for contacting us. In part, we think you are on the right track: for instance, in putting a ? against the name of the Labour Party. Also, in the point you make that there can only be *one* Socialist Party for it to



be successful.

But (and this is quite a big but) although there are a number of parties which claim to be ‘socialist’, most of them do as the Labour Party – ‘Old’ Labour as well as ‘New’ Labour : i.e. they work for reforms within capitalism. If they do say they work for Socialism, they seem to find it essential to propose this as their “ultimate aim” with a list of reforms as their immediate goals.

The SPGB has worked from the start for Socialism and nothing but Socialism. By this we mean:

*a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.*

That would mean the end of the class system, the wages system, the production for profit system, together with the problems caused by competitive capitalism (e.g. poverty and wars). And Socialism can only be achieved by democratic, class-conscious, political action by the working class.

You will no doubt have noted some of the material posted on our website. Please especially note the statement of our OBJECT and DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES: this is the basic platform of The SPGB, and carries with it the obligation to be opposed to war, religion and racism.

For the record: in the 1st World War, while all the supposedly ‘socialist-ic’ parties in Britain and Europe supported the war, The SPGB was, from the start of the war to the end, opposed, as a matter of principle: we hold that wars are never fought in the interests of the working class.

In the latest conflict, Iraq, there were a number of groups and organisations who were opposed to this war - as illegal, etc - but who have previously supported other wars, or would have supported the Iraq war if there had been a 2nd UN resolution, if there had been any truth in the WMD argument, etc.

[Back to top](#)

## General Secretary's Report for 2005

2005 has been another productive year for The SPGB. Besides the publication of four issues of The SPGB, we also published A CENTURY OF POLITICAL STRUGGLE: CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS, POLITICS AND PRINCIPLE. The WAR AND CAPITALISM pamphlet and the pamphlet on the Labour Party Labour were updated and re-issued. A pamphlet on the subject of reforms is due in 2006.

We have held a series of lectures at Marchmont Street in London, all of which were of a high quality. The Summer School in June was well attended. Outdoor meetings were also held at Hyde Park. Members attended anti-war demonstrations in London, the Burford Levellers Festival in Oxford in May, the Tolpuddle Festival in July, and the Burston Strike School Festival in September. Members were also at the Anarchist Book Fair in October, and attended various political and trade union conferences around the country. With a small membership, The SPGB works exceedingly hard to propagate the case for Socialism as and when the opportunity arises.

The web site continues to expand and visitors come from all around the world which is appropriate when the case for Socialism is global. Two visitors from Australia came to a Party lecture after seeing the meeting advertised on our web site.

Our comrades in the World Socialist Party (India) are working hard and hope to produce a journal in the New Year. They recently published a reply to BBC Radio 4’s discussion on Marx as a “*philosopher*”. We extend to our comrades in India fraternal greetings.

Financially we are in a strong position. Publishing socialist literature and holding meetings is expensive but the party has absorbed the costs.



The SPGB has survived another year under difficult circumstances where political apathy and disinterestedness appear to hold sway. However, capitalism and the capitalist class will not let up in the intensity and extent of exploitation. Fierce competition in the job market makes capitalism unpredictable, unpleasant and hard. The working class still have a world to win.

[Back to top](#)

# Object and Declaration of Principles

## Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

## Declaration of Principles

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN HOLDS:

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (ie land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.
5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.
7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.
8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

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